HYBRID WORK SUCCESS IN THE CONTEXT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

Companies operating in an era of constant upheaval are well aware of the fact that hybrid work models are here to stay. Forward-thinking managers are evaluating the first post-pandemic experience, recognising the many vulnerabilities of remote working, from the issue of volatile work productivity to the need to transform the knowledge and skills of managers and members of hybrid teams. We can craft many bold visions about the future; however, we need a tech-savvy and educated workforce to implement them successfully. The scientific literature on hybrid working models offers new studies on remote teams' management needs and the portfolio of new skills to be acquired by both managers and members of the hybrid workforce to ensure the organisational readiness for the upcoming changes. However, there needs to be more research aimed at identifying employee attitudes regarding adopting educational content in the form of the new knowledge and skills necessary to excel in remote work. This study attempts to bridge this gap and complement the portfolio of innovative thinking on hybrid work models from the perspective of its future effectiveness. Based on the data from the longitudinal multi-client research of consumer behaviour, media consumption and lifestyle MML-TGI and applying selected demographic variables, the authors of this study present people's current attitudes towards educational content adoption and knowledge and skills acquisition. The collected data provides detailed information on the age and education cohorts that are most and least receptive to adopting educational content. The research results will serve middle and higher-level management of companies to make data-based decisions on the design of their training programmes, including justification of higher costs for modifying educational content and formats to maximize remote work success.

Keywords: attitude to education, hybrid work models, knowledge and skills transformation, remote team management, newskilling

JEL Code: I25, M53, P46

Introduction

Hybrid work arrangements are undergoing dynamic changes. They are at the forefront of attention focus of all managerial levels in companies since there are specific problems and situations to solve at every level. However, the paper's authors are convinced that it is necessary to distinguish between *ad hoc remote work arrangements* (typical for the first year of the pandemic) and *a thoroughly elaborated and well-thought-out basis for future hybrid work models.* Team members are expected to work remotely while crossing the boundaries of time and space. Therefore, systematic support covering every aspect of remote work is essential. The efficient remote teams' training design represents an integral part of the hybrid work models.

Taking into account the opinions and research findings of professionals and theorists specializing in organizational behaviour and HR management (Ulrich, 1997; Chamorro Premuzic, 2021; Kim, 2019; Gartner, 2020; Orhan et al., 2021), this study focuses on identifying the necessary preconditions for the successful implementation of hybrid work models in the form of workers' attitudes towards knowledge and skills acquisition as part of their life attitudes.

Not all segments of the workforce are identical in their approach to learning. The distinctions relate to different generations and are conditioned not only by the remote workers' age but also by the level of education attained. As for the content of the newly designed training courses for remote workers, they should be focused on those areas of knowledge and personal development, which will guarantee a high level of agile work in remote work conditions and outstanding results. At the same time, relevant content and increased flexibility of learning, including mobile learning, are expected by learners (Knihová & Hronová, 2019). Namely, the courses for the remote workforce should involve *digital skills acquisitions, cloud apps, security aspects of digital communication, cybersecurity, social issues, psychological support, and employee engagement.*

According to the World Economic Forum, by 2022, 54% of all employees will require significant upskilling since the Fourth Industrial Revolution is causing a large-scale decline in some roles as they become redundant or automated (Brende, 2019). Considering all the inevitable demographic shifts and economic changes, we have to highlight the idea that it has never been so important to invest in human capital as it is now.

In the recent Sloan Management Review article, Catherine Kelloggs writes: *"Leaders engaged in workforce transformation are running into unexpected roadblocks as they attempt to keep their employees' skills in sync with rapid digitization and automation" (Kellogg, 2021).* Apart from the generally known terms of *'reskilling'* and *'upskilling'*, the author explains

the idea of *'newskilling'*. Newskilling should be understood in connection with the adoption of new technologies. As a result, some jobs will be eliminated while others will emerge. Also, many existing job roles will have to be redesigned to such an extent that the current experts might feel threatened, which may result in difficulties in accepting their existing roles' redesign (Kellogg, 2021). The author also mentions the possible friction between digital natives at the junior level and their more senior co-workers in their struggle to pick up the new skills needed.

In order to take a strategic approach to reskilling, upskilling, or newskilling, the authors of this study investigated people's attitudes towards education as such, towards the acquisition of knowledge and learning across the entire lifespan.

Methodology

The quantitative research implemented in this study works with a cross-sectional analysis which is designed to study entire segments within an overall population over a specified period of time. From the research design perspective, it is a type of observational study.

The source of the research data is MML-TGI research (Market & Media & Lifestyle - Target Group Index) provided by a prestige research agency Median, s.r.o. The research focuses on the consumer and media behaviour of the population and lifestyle issues. It is a longitudinal observational study that has been conducted since 1996. From 2021 onwards, data collection is carried out only by the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) method. In the Czech Republic, 15 000 respondents participate. The study includes more than 3 000 brands and 300 product types, data on media consumption and internet usage. All this is supplemented by questions on lifestyle.

The objective of the cross-sectional analysis was to determine, analyse and interpret the adoption levels of educational content and identify socio-demographic segments of consumers suitable for targeting educational content through relevant formats of instruction. The authors worked with annual data for the year 2021.

The MML-TGI research contains several statements related to learning and education, while Statement No. 341 appears to be appropriate for determining consumer attitudes towards education content adoption. It reads as follows:

341 Above all, I would like to achieve
as much knowledge and learning as possible in my life.

It is a statement formulated in an ich-form that expresses an individual's attitude towards a selected important aspect of the external world. In this case, it is the desire to acquire new

knowledge. Attitudes are an important part of the socio-demographic profile of consumers. Their correct understanding in a given context is the basis for the formulation of relevant educational content of the training programmes directly targeted at appropriate consumer segments.

From the educational perspective, the underlying assumption is that educational content adoption levels inherently influence the levels of insight and knowledge. From this we can deduce that consumers with a positive attitude towards the acquisition of knowledge and learning in general will also have a positive attitude towards the acquisition of new knowledge and skills provided by their employers with the aim to ensure the success of hybrid work models, especially remote working modes.

Statement No. 341 and the data obtained in reduced form (R) are represented in the YES/NEITHER YES NOR NO/NO answers. The authors consider only the answer YES to be a positive relationship towards education and learning. Knowledge acquisition is an active cognitive process. The ambivalent attitude of the respondents (the answer NEITHER YES NOR NO) does not express the proactive attitude of the respondent towards the acquisition of knowledge and cognition and in effect leads to the same result as the rejection of education.

The research objective was specified in the research question, the wording of which is as follows: **Which socio-demographic groups have a positive attitude towards educational content adoption and which have a negative attitude towards it?**

The authors formulated 2 hypotheses, which correspond to one-sided alternative hypotheses when testing the deviation of the observed value (E - expected) in the corresponding cell of the contingency table from the expected value (O - observed) assuming the independence of the variables listed in the contingency table - H0: E = O; H1: O > E.

For the actual evaluation of the hypotheses and statistical interpretation, the author worked with the following methods and tools in the cross-sectional analysis: chi-square test, sign scheme, affinity indices and frequency plots. The Table 1 below states the evaluation of the hypotheses.

Tab. 1 Evaluation of the hypotheses

Hypothesis	Hypothesis formulation	Hypothesis testing result
H1	The demographic segment of tertiary educated people has the most positive attitude to education and learning.	The hypothesis was verified.
H2	The demographic segment of the under 29 age cohort is more receptive to education and learning than other age cohorts.	The hypothesis was only partially verified (age cohort 12-19 YES; 20-29 NO)

Source: own processing

Statistical evaluation of hypotheses H1 – H2.

H1	The demographic segment of the tertiary educated people has the most positive attitude to education and learning.

The hypothesis H1 was evaluated based on **the relationship between the Statement No. 341 and demographic data item 1a Respondent's education (R)**, i.e., based on the reduced data (yes/neither yes nor no/no).

Firstly, the hypothesis of overall independence of the two variables mentioned above was rejected based on the significance <0.001. Therefore, the hypothesis H1 could then be tested using the sign scheme method - see Tab. 15.

Tab. 15 Relationship between the Statement No. 341 and Respondents' Education Attained

MML-TGI CR 2021 Q1 – Q4 CONNECTED (04.01.2021 - 05.12.2021)	341 Above all, I would like to achieve as much knowledge and learning as possible in my life.					
Contingency table	+/–			Index		
CS: CS ALL	yes	neither yes nor no	no	yes	neither yes nor no	no
1a. Respondent's education (R)						
Primary education	0	0	0	100	96	113
Apprenticeship/High school without a diploma	– – –	+ + +	+ + +	84	118	113
Secondary education with a high school diploma	+ + +	–	0	104	96	95
Tertiary education	+ + +	– – –	– – –	122	78	77

Source: own elaboration using the DATA ANALYZER software tool of the MML-TGI research

Based on the + + + sign in the cell for the combination of higher education and positive attitude towards education and learning (Statement No. 341 = YES), **we accept the alternative hypothesis** at the 0.1% significance level.

The affinity index of 122 in the YES group of the Statement No. 341 for the observed category of higher education means that the segment of respondents with a positive attitude towards education and learning has more respondents with tertiary education (college or university) by 22% than the population as a whole.

H2	The demographic segment of the under 29 age cohort is more receptive to education and learning than other age cohorts.

The hypothesis H2 was evaluated based on **the relationship between the Statement**

No. 341 and demographic data item Respondent's age (R), i.e., based on the reduced data (yes/neither yes nor no/no).

Firstly, the hypothesis of overall independence of the two variables mentioned above was rejected based on the significance <0.001. Therefore, the hypothesis H2 could then be tested using the sign scheme method - see Tab. 16.

Tab. 16 Relationship between the Statement No. 341 and Respondents' Age

MML-TGI CR 2021 Q1 – Q4 CONNECTED (04.01.2021 - 05.12.2021)	341 Above all, I would like to achieve as much knowledge and learning as possible in my life.					
Contingency table	+/–			Index		
CS: CS ALL	yes	neither yes nor no	no	yes	neither yes nor no	no
Respondent's age (R)						
12-19 years	+ + +	– – –	0	117	80	93
20-29 years	0	– – –	0	104	90	113
30-39 years	– – –	0	+ + +	90	100	141
40-49 years	– – –	+ + +	+ + +	86	113	120
50-59 years	–	+ + +	– – –	95	114	78
60-69 years	+ +	0	– – –	106	100	76
70-79 years	+ + +	– – –	– – –	123	83	58

Source: own elaboration using the DATA ANALYZER software tool of the MML-TGI research

Based on the + + + sign in the cell for the combination of the age cohort 12-19 years and positive attitude towards education and learning (Statement No. 341 = YES), **we accept the alternative hypothesis** at the 0.1% significance level.

Based on the 0 sign in the cell for the combination of the age cohort 20-29 years and positive attitude towards education and learning (Statement No. 341 = YES), **we do not accept the alternative hypothesis** at the 5 % significance level.

Hypothesis H2 was only partially confirmed; it holds for the 12 - 19 age cohort, but failed to hold for the 20 - 29 age cohort.

The affinity index 117 in the YES group of the Statement No. 341 for the analyzed age cohort of 12-19 years means that there are 17% more respondents in the segment of respondents with a positive attitude towards education and learning than in the population as a whole.

Interpretation of data in the context of education and learning adoption

In terms of the appropriateness of targeting educational content, the cross-sectional analysis revealed several important facts:

(a) **in terms of education attainment**, the most suitable segment for educational content adoption (knowledge and learning) appears to be university-educated consumers (affinity index 122); in addition to this segment, consumers with secondary education with a high school diploma also have a positive attitude towards knowledge and learning (affinity index 104); consumers with an apprenticeship or High School without a diploma and with primary education only have the most negative attitude to knowledge and learning – see Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 The Attitude of Respondents Towards Knowledge and Learning Depending on Education Attained
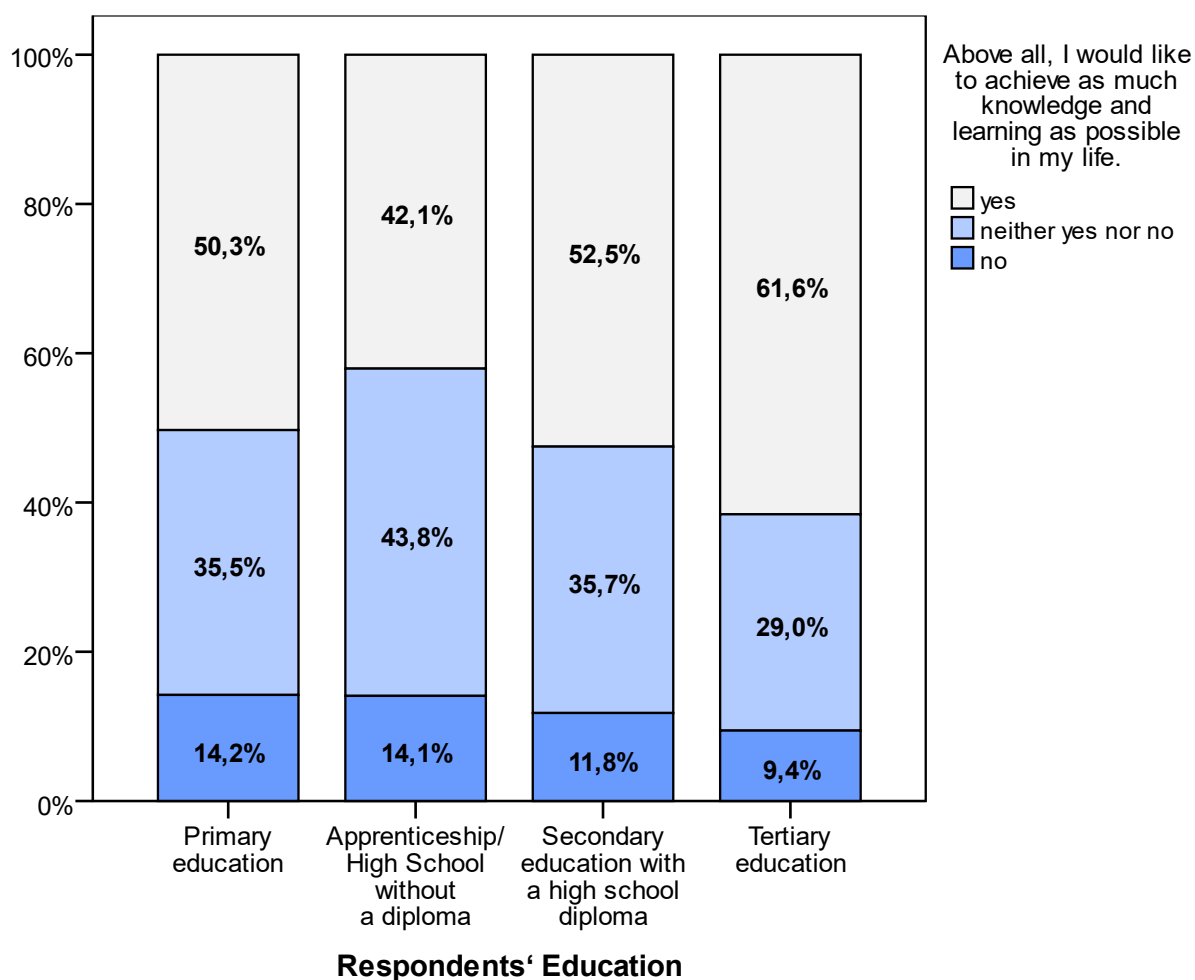
(b) **in terms of age cohorts**, consumers in the 12-19 age category appear to be the most suitable for educational content adoption (affinity index 117); however, an interesting fact is the positive attitude towards knowledge and learning of the 70-79 age category (affinity index 123). In contrast, consumers in the 40-49 age category (productive age) have the least positive attitude towards educational content adoption (affinity index 86). Overall, it can be concluded that the potential of knowledge and learning adoption increases with the distance of the respondent's age category from middle age (i.e., the 40-49 age cohort) – see Fig. 2.

Fig. 2 The Attitude of Respondents Towards Knowledge and Learning Depending on Age
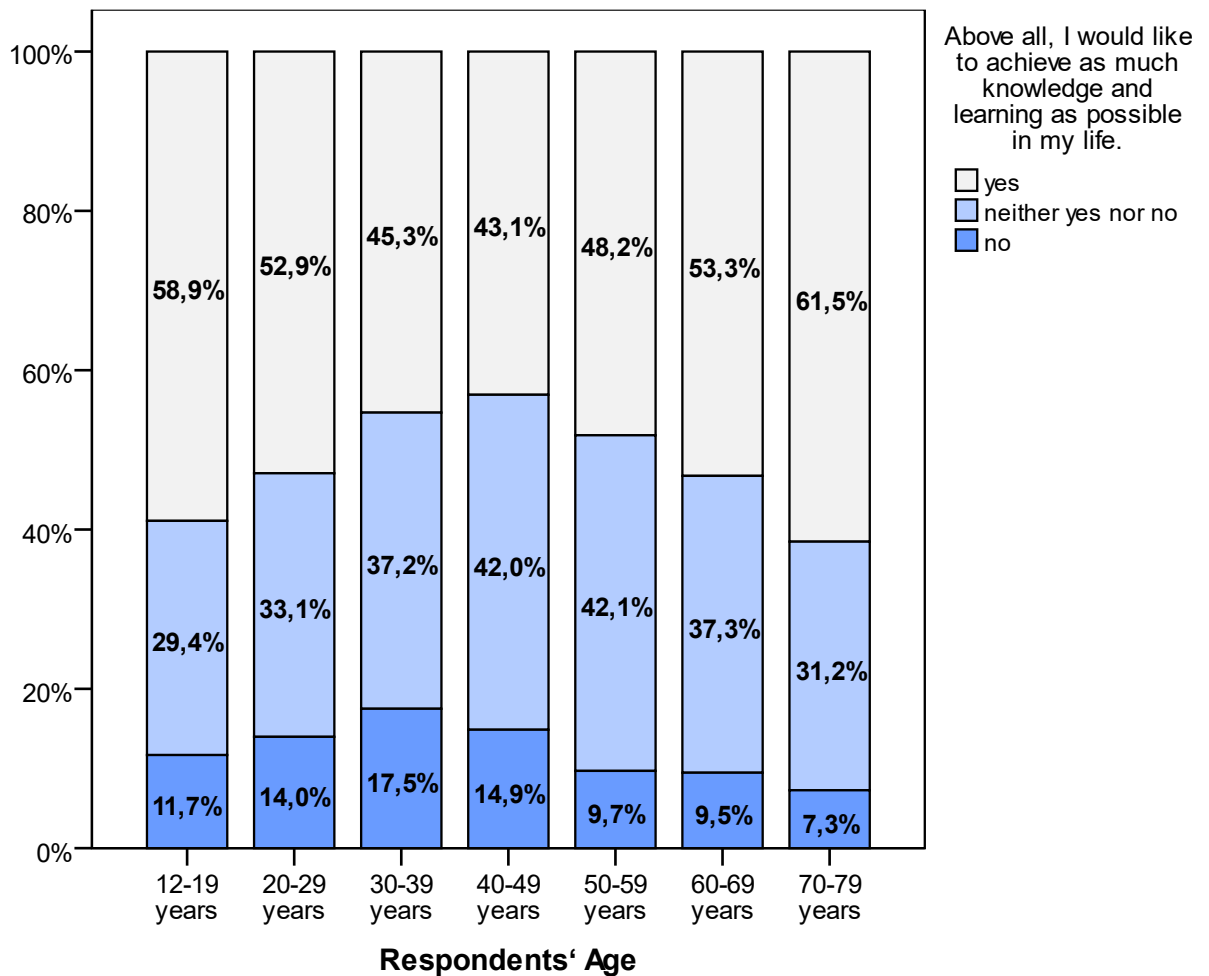
A cross-sectional analysis based on the data from Median's MML-TGI longitudinal research provides important findings on the potential of knowledge and learning adoption as well as the precise identification of socio-demographic consumer segments suitable for targeting educational content and relevant training activities.

Conclusion

In order to answer the research question "*Which socio-demographic groups have a positive attitude towards educational content adoption and which have a negative attitude towards it?*" the authors of this study conducted a cross-sectional analysis based on the secondary data from the MML-TGI research (data obtained from the year 2021) to identify with precision segments for targeting educational content at remote workers.

The cross-sectional analysis revealed that the economically active segments of the population in the Czech Republic show the least positive attitude towards acquiring knowledge

and learning (the age cohort of 30-39 years = 45.3% and the age cohort of 40-49 years = 43,1%). This finding is a cautionary moment for managers managing hybrid teams. It is a clear signal that upskilling, reskilling and newskilling of employees in these segments requires special attention in terms of designing the content and formats of corporate learning activities to make them more motivating and effective, aiming at achieving the necessary competencies needed to implement remote working successfully.

If we want to reach a new destination, we typically need GPS navigation to guide our steps. If the 'destination' is to keep our hybrid work teams running efficiently and smoothly, recognizing and appreciating the need to transform the knowledge and skills of hybrid teams is just the beginning of the journey. We can view this journey as a continuous transformation since new challenges will continue to emerge, and meeting these challenges is possible only with the help of a technologically savvy and educated workforce. Only then will it be possible for our forward-thinking managers to craft and bring to life genuinely bold visions.

Acknowledgements

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